

BMR – Module 1 – Concepts of giftedness and characteristics of gifted students

Betts and Neihert – Reading 1

What is the concept proposed by the author/s?

In this reading Betts and Neihert propose a theoretical model that profiles gifted and talented students based on their behaviours, feelings and needs. They outline six different profiles that aim to provide educators with an insight into such students but not a classification tool, whilst acknowledging that these profiles may not define all gifted and talented students. This concept aims to address an area of research that (at this time) was very much in development when considering the differences amongst gifted and talented students.

The authors describe six main 'types' of student; the successful, the challenging, the underground, the dropouts, the double labelled and the autonomous learner. Each type details how the student may or may not interact with the school system, educators and peers. It also outlines typical emotions and behaviours both positive and negative that may affect the student at school and in the future.

Which groups of students may be excluded from standard testing?

Type II (The Challenging) students may exhibit non-conformist behaviours that exclude them from standardised testing or may become 'drop-outs' from school systems. Type IV (The dropouts) may attend school sporadically or have already dropped out of the school system.

Type V (The double labelled) are the most likely group to be excluded from standard testing. Teachers may make assumptions of the need for standard testing due to a different need displayed in the form of confusion, disruptive behaviour or stress for example.

Which other identification methods may overcome this inequality?

Earlier identification of Type II and Type IV students may raise self-esteem and prevent later frustrations. Peer recommendations, parent/other adult nomination, interviews, performance and creativity testing opportunities may lead to earlier identification. Type IV students may also be identified by a discrepancy between IQ and demonstrated achievement, interviews from previous teachers, inconsistencies in performance.

Type V students may be identified by a scatter of 11 points on WISC/WAIS, recommendation of others or a special education teacher, interview, performance or a teacher advocate. Most of these identification methods rely on the work of another adult much the same as the possibility of being excluded from standard testing. Therefore the role of other adults in a Type V student could be crucial in both positive and negative ways.

Which identification methods are appropriate for your school, and why?

Currently I believe most teachers would feel most comfortable using standardised, more concrete methods such as IQ tests or performance related outcomes because teachers often feel they need facts to support their thinking. I don't believe at this stage our school has had the opportunity to develop it's full awareness of the range of identification methods because further professional development in this area is required. Additionally, in our context I believe teachers may be afraid to use or rely on other identification methods for fear of setting a precedent amongst parents.

All of the identification methods outlined in the reading could be appropriate to our school because we have such a diverse student population who may need identifying through different processes. However, in order for these to be successful and meaningful further training needs to be provided to all staff and a person appointed to manage gifted and talented throughout the school.

Gagne – Reading 2

What is the concept proposed by the author/s?

Gagne proposes a model that defines two main concepts in the field of gifted educations. He proposes to define what giftedness and talent is. Giftedness is defined as a natural ability, innate and untrained. Talent is defined as mastery of skills or ability. This model is applicable to the 90th percentile or the top 10%.

The natural gift is the raw material then for talent. You cannot be talented without being gifted. Talent is developed when children engage in some form of systematic learning. Gifts may never be acted upon to become talents. This is the developmental process.

Intrapersonal and environmental catalysts will affect the manifestation of processing gifts into talents. Motivation, volition, self-management, efficiency and hereditary predisposition influence the talent process. Geographic, demographic and sociological factors can also affect the fruition of talent.

Different levels of giftedness and talent are proposed by Gagne; they are moderately, highly, exceptionally and extremely.

Which groups of students may be excluded from standard testing?

Primarily, those most affected will be those students for which environmental factors do not allow them to be included in standard testing. Geographic factors such as country, access to testing or access to education may prevent from testing being available. Therefore, students in less developed countries, or countries which don't offer gifted programs of study are most likely to be affected.

Sociological factors such as family/parental, teacher attitudes may result in exclusion or barriers to gifted identification. Therefore, students from countries/societies/ groups that do not recognise/ or hold value of giftedness are most likely to be affected.

Which other identification methods may overcome this inequality?

A wide ranging identification and criteria toolkit may help to identify groups of students from less academic based backgrounds. Identification at an early age, as Gagne argues, may provide a more realistic overview of giftedness.

For those student with sociological barriers, more academic, results based evidence such as IQ testing may help to convince parents/families/teachers of the students' gift.

Which identification methods are appropriate for your school, and why?

Gagne's DGMT could certainly be used within our school to identify and differentiate between natural ability or giftedness and talent. This would provide an excellent framework for discussion of pupils. However, I feel staff would be somewhat reluctant to label and level children as gifted without seeking professional help/dialog from a G+T specialist.

In our context I imagine it will be somewhat difficult to distinguish between natural ability and mastery, for able students. Particularly, those that have extra tuition. Wide criteria would need to be used to confirm the label of gifted.

That said, this model could easily be adapted for different aged children and would serve as a useful too for identification.

Dorbis and Vasilevska – Reading 3

What is the concept proposed by the author/s?

The authors propose that identification of gifted students may need to include community conceptions of giftedness, so that it recognises and represents all cultures equally.

Dorbis and Vasilevska identify that some non-dominant cultures are under-represented in gifted programs and provisions. They cite possible reasons for this including; conceptions of gifted students, testing methods, curriculum, learning styles, home language, stereotypes of different cultural groups and historical influences.

The reading suggests that in order for schools to represent all cultures equally they may need to consider conceptions of giftedness, in particular, what that community deems valuable and look at incorporating them in their identification methods. Importantly, the reading acknowledges that such attributes may not be demonstrated within school time.

Standard testing is largely used as a quick, and definite way for identification of gifted and talented attributes. However, the reading suggests such methods may not be suitable for non-dominant cultures. Mary Frasier and Gibson have researched models that target such groups in Australia, finding that standard testing would not value the indicators of giftedness within minority cultures.

Therefore, schools must use a wide range of identification techniques if they aim to get a truer cross-section of giftedness within their student cohorts.

Which groups of students may be excluded from standard testing?

Non-dominant cultures may not perform as well in standard testing as the dominant culture group/s of that country if the standard testing does not cater for the identification of the cultural gifts and talents a group holds valuable.

Which other identification methods may overcome this inequality?

Great understanding of the non-dominant culture's perception of gifts and talents would allow testing to incorporate these values. Identification may need to come from parents or community members. A variety of identification methods may need to be used.

Which identification methods are appropriate for your school, and why?

Being in an Asian context, an understanding of the cultural value of extra tuition and homework would be beneficial to any teacher who is attempting to identify a gifted student. The teacher must be careful not to confuse mastery and giftedness because the student may be working at a higher level than age expectations due to the extra exposure to tuition. Therefore identification may need to accommodate this cultural knowledge, perhaps by the range and type of questioning, a variety of identification methods such as standard and practical methods.

Again being in an International school context, identification methods must accommodate second-language learners. Many of the children in our school are working in their second, third or maybe fourth language. Identification methods must accommodate these needs, be varied and broad.

Silverman- Reading 4

What is the concept proposed by the author/s?

Silverman proposes that 'asynchrony' could be a new and better definition of giftedness. He proposes that such 'uneven development' mentally as apposed to physically is a fairer definition to give giftedness because it doesn't equate giftedness necessarily with high achievement.

This definition indeed focuses on the 'vulnerability' of the gifted child, particularly the gifted child with learning difficulties who may be mis-identified.

They are called 'twice-exceptional' as they have disparity between their strengths and weaknesses, which could lead to their giftedness remaining unnoticed if the school focuses on achievement.

Which groups of students may be excluded from standard testing?

The 'twice-exceptional' students are the most likely not to be identified from standard testing. A student may have auditory- sequential difficulties that manifest in their reading, writing and spelling but then have visual-spatial gifts. A standard test is more likely to rely on auditory- sequential skills.

Which other identification methods may overcome this inequality?

Identification methods that specifically target the proposed area of giftedness would be most applicable for a twice-exceptional student.

Which identification methods are appropriate for your school, and why?

A wide range of identification methods need to be available within our school. Currently, our identification methods other than standard testing are unclear as the school is in its infancy in the provision of GT students. A knowledgeable member of staff or specifically trained individual needs to be appointed to oversee such provision. This staff member can then work collaboratively with classroom teachers in providing a wider-range and more suitable identification method for individual students.